



# WILL HILLENBRAND

“I have lived almost all my life in Ohio, where in my neighborhood, I grew up surrounded by stories. My parents owned a barbershop, where I listened to conversations that seemed to me to be stories about adult life. I spent hours at baseball games, sharing the stories about the teams and players that make up the mythology of baseball. My grandmother lived nearby, and my three brothers and I would keep her company during thunderstorms while she told us stories about her early life on a farm.

“Although I regularly visited the nearby library, there weren’t many books at our house. But we had an encyclopedia from which my father read aloud ‘The Night Before Christmas’ each year, and I remember the sound of his voice giving life to the words as I conjured up pictures in my mind.

“Drawing was how I captured the stories that I heard. My older brother sketched cartoons, and I began by copying him. I drew mostly at the kitchen table, but also used my crayons on stairwell walls. My first art class was as a sophomore in high school, but I discovered that all those years of listening and drawing had given me a good eye for putting ideas together as pictures.

“I went to art school at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. Although my father was worried that I wouldn’t be able to make a living, after graduation I found work in advertising. After taking a class in picture book art at Ohio State University, I decided to try illustrating children’s literature. Now it is my full-time work. I spend a lot of time in schools sharing my picture books and how I create them. It’s important for children to enjoy the process of art and not worry too much about the finished product.

“I really work in three worlds at once: the world of the imagination, the world of myth, and the physical world; children seem to live comfortably in all three. Successful illustrations link these worlds together and give a visual voice to the story. As I begin to draw, I try to keep the child’s viewpoint foremost in my mind. For each book I keep a journal of my sketches, and each one has a child’s drawing tucked inside to remind me that a child’s imagination is the starting and ending point for my art.

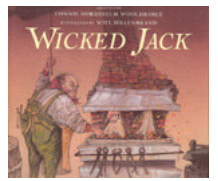
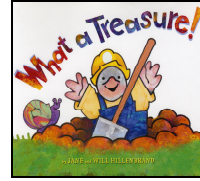
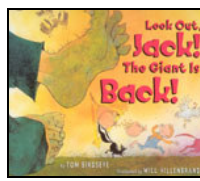
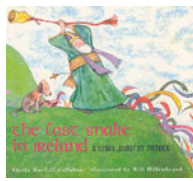
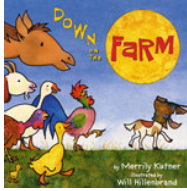
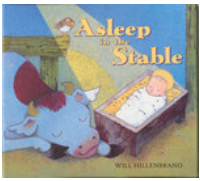
“My studio shelves are lined with books, toys, and folk art animals to help me with ideas for my drawings. My pencil is my favorite art tool, so I begin the illustration process with pencil sketches made in my journal. I’ll then scan some of them into my computer to experiment with size and composition. I also use the computer for page layout but still like to use traditional media to make the final illustrations. I live with family in Ohio.”

For more on Will Hillenbrand, visit his website: [www.willhillenbrand.com](http://www.willhillenbrand.com).



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